

# **BARBER PROPERTY DONATION**

**Proposed addition to the Beckman Wildlife Management Area**

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT**

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

House Bill 526, passed by the 1987 Legislature (MCA 87-1-241 and MCA 87-1-242), authorizes Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) to acquire an interest in land for the purpose of protecting and improving wildlife habitat. These acquisitions can be through fee title, conservation easements, or leasing. In 1989, the Montana legislature passed House Bill 720 requiring that a socioeconomic assessment be completed when wildlife habitat is acquired using Habitat Montana monies. These assessments evaluate the significant social and economic impacts of the purchase on local governments, employment, schools, and impacts on local businesses.

This socioeconomic evaluation addresses the donation of the Barber property presently owned by the RBB Deer Lands Trust Fund into the Beckman Wildlife Management Area. The report addresses the physical and institutional setting as well as the social and economic impacts associated with the proposed donation.

## II. PHYSICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

### A. Property Description

The Barber property is located 12 miles northeast of Denton, Mt. The property is comprised of 1674 acres split between two parcels that are adjacent to the existing Beckman WMA. A detailed description of this property is included in the management plan.

### B. Habitat and Wildlife Populations

This 1674 acre parcel is classified as river breaks. The Beckman WMA is managed for white-tailed and mule deer as well as upland game birds. A more detailed description of the habitat and wildlife resources is provided in the management plan.

### C. Current Use

### D. Management Alternatives

- 1) Accept the donation of this property from the RBB Deer Lands Trust Fund
- 2) Do not accept the donation

### III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Section II identified the management alternatives this report addresses. This gifted land will provide long term protection of important wildlife habitat and consistent management of this land. Section III quantifies the social and economic consequences of the two management alternatives following two basic accounting stances: financial and local area impacts.

Financial impacts address the cost of the fee title transfer to MFWP and discuss the impacts on tax revenues to local government agencies including school districts.

Expenditure data associated with the use of the property provides information for analyzing the impacts these expenditures may have on local businesses (i.e. income and employment).

#### **A. Financial Impacts**

The financial impacts associated with the donation of the Barber property relates to the incorporation of the land into the existing Beckman WMA.

The financial impacts to local governments are the potential changes in tax revenues resulting from the inclusion of this property. MFWP is required by Montana Code 87-1-603 to pay “to the county a sum equal to the amount of taxes which would be payable on county assessment of the property were it taxable to a private citizen.” Current taxes on this land amount to \$3,674.00

#### **B. Economic Impacts**

There will not be any significant financial impacts to local businesses associated with the donation of this land to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The current agricultural practices (producing hay and grazing cattle) will continue as part of the management scheme for the Beckman WMA.

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The donation of the Barber Property to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will provide long term protection for wildlife habitat, maintain the open space integrity of the land, enhance public recreation opportunities and simplify management on the Beckman WMA.

This donation MFWP will not cause a reduction in tax revenues on this property from their current levels to Fergus County under Montana Code 97-1-603.

